

What is reasonable geotourism in volcanic areas?

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Volcanic activity creates many beautiful landforms and produces fertile soils, geothermal energy and mineral resources in many places in geological time. It is expected that the role of geotourism in the volcanic areas like in Japan, Indonesia, and Greece is different from that of non-volcanic geoparks. Geotourism in those geoparks not only provides stories on the geological and related histories to visitors, but also should provide knowledge on volcanic hazards and convey disaster experiences of local people.

Although volunteer and skillful guides have grown already in many touristic volcanic areas, special training is needed to teach them about geotourism practices in volcanic areas. In Toba Caldera-Usu Volcano Global Geopark, "Volcano Meister network" has been established for the main purpose of minimizing disasters from future eruptions. The Meisters also serve as well-trained and model guides in the geopark. In Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geopark, geo-guides are expected to behave as leaders of their community and visitors when they face sudden volcanic hazards. In particular, stories told by guides that directly experienced volcanic disaster, are very effective for visitors (and young people) to understand behaviors of nature hazards and disasters.

Soon after severe natural disasters, scientists often want to preserve damaged spots or buildings as memorial sites. However, those sites make some people suffer and recall painful memories. Considerate and sustainable conversation is requested to preserve the disaster sites as geo-/cultural sites. Networking of geoparks is effective when they meet geohazards, such as examples at Kirishima and Izu-Oshima volcano geoparks. Soon after disasters, members of the Japan Geoparks Network assisted the sufferers to rebuild communities by giving hands, donation and encouragement, and helping them to learn about natural hazards to reduce risks from future disasters.

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